

dialogue

The Staff Newsletter of the Ministry of Community and Social Services

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Fair share funding for Peel and York:

Thistletown programs to be phased out

As part of its on-going move toward community-based services, the ministry will phase out programs at three Thistletown Regional Centre sites by July 1996 and will re-invest \$12.2 million to expand community-operated children's services in York, Peel and Metro Toronto.

Local planning groups in these communities will take leadership in identifying priorities and in planning new services that are accessible and responsive to children and families.

The announcement, made by Minister Tony Silipo on Jan. 17, will result in the closing of Thistletown's Rexdale campus, the Warrendale Court SAFE-T program and the Lakeshore VALTA program.

The funding will help address some long-standing resource inequities in the high-growth area of Peel and York regions, the minister said, adding that the per-capita funding for children's services in these two regions is the lowest in the province.

The announcement will affect about 300 Thistletown employees. Every effort will be made to re-assign Thistletown staff to other work locations in keeping with their rights and entitlements. The ministry will provide a job offer guarantee and



retraining and placement services for classified staff.

A redeployment co-ordinator has already been appointed, and a team of advisers will be placed on-site to support staff through the redeployment process.

The minister has assured families that children who require on-going service will be placed in alternative programs in the communities that fully address the child's needs.

The Syl Apps campus in Oakville, which provides secure custody, detention and treatment services, will continue to be operated directly by MCSS, as will York Detention Centre for young offenders in downtown Toronto.



Photo: Brian Fickell

Our Payroll staff were surprised and pleased to be presented recently with the "Above and Beyond Award" by the Chief Administrative Officers (CAO) Forum. The CAO Forum is an organization dedicated to improving administrative practices, and its members are assistant deputy ministers responsible for finance and administration; it annually sponsors the CAO Awards for Excellence in the Ontario Public Service. The award was given to our staff in recognition of their efforts

in implementing the new Corporate Payroll System, better known as CORPAY, so smoothly, as well as keeping up with complex and constant changes required by the social contract. Showing off the award are Human Resources manager Phil Branstetter, manager of the CORPAY Support Unit Jane Anderson, acting ADM of Corporate Services (the division responsible for financial administration) Barb Saunders, and Human Resources director Margaret Weightman.

ESR: The consultation process



Since beginning the Employment Systems Review process, a wide variety of opportunities — e-mails on the DEC network, live presentations to staff, focus-group meetings and one-on-one interviews — have been used to encourage and ensure that as many staff as possible can participate in the process. We have asked for feedback, comments and suggestions.

As we approach the final stage of the ESR, two important activities remain to be done: consultations with key stakeholders, and the presentation of the final ESR report.

The ESR Task Force will soon hold consultation sessions with key stakeholders to consult on the draft of the ESR final report. These stakeholders include representatives of people concerned about the review, such as staff from the designated groups, as well as management and other staff with an interest in employment equity. These stakeholders will also be provided with the draft version of the final report and will be given time to

review it.

The purpose of the consultations with these stakeholders is two-fold: to ensure that the findings, barriers and recommendations reflect common as well as unique concerns; and to ensure that stakeholders have a common understanding of the report. More important, we want to ensure people are committed to this document. This will help us work toward creating a healthy and harmonious equitable workplace.

During consultations with designated-group representatives, the main focus of the discussions will be on the findings and barriers to employment equity as they have been identified so far. The focus of discussions with senior management, Management Committee, Program Management Committee and Human Resources Committee will be on the actual implementation of the recommendations.

The Task Force will analyze all the information received during the consultations to ensure that the feedback from the sessions is

Realigning ministry functions in the north



As part of the ministry's restructuring, there will be a realignment of the ministry's organization in the north which will create a single area office in Sudbury.

The current three northern area offices — in North Bay, Sudbury and Thunder Bay — will be combined into one. The new northern area office in Sudbury should be fully operational by Dec. 31.

Suzanne Herbert, Assistant Deputy Minister of Program Management, made the announcement to Thunder Bay Area Office staff on Jan. 24 and met with staff at the Sudbury and North Bay area offices on Jan. 25. An e-mail announcement from Deputy Minister Rosemary Proctor was sent to all staff Jan. 24.

This change, which is part of a

restructuring review of the program management functions in northern Ontario, is being made for several reasons, Suzanne said. It will provide balanced management attention to direct services (particularly social assistance) and our work with transfer payment agencies. It will also enhance native services, streamline our administrative services and address ministry financial constraints.

Recruitment for a new area manager is under way.

As a result of these changes, a number of ministry staff will be relocated, and some will find new positions in the enhanced and realigned local functions. Every effort will be made to minimize job loss.

The realigned northern structure

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How to meet special needs

You're organizing a meeting — maybe even a conference — and among the participants will be people who have disabilities. How do you accommodate their needs, and where can you find these services?

Check **A Guide to Alternative Communications/Resource Manual**, a publication from the Ministry of Labour's Centre for Disability and Work.

The guide is a listing of alternative formats — forms of communication other than conventional print and video formats. Alternative formats include Braille, large print,



audio cassette, video captioning/windowing and computer disk communications methods. The guide will tell you where and how you can obtain these services for use within the Ontario Public Service.

It is also a resource guide for communications support services, including interpreting services, assistive listening systems, computerized note-taking and real-time captioning (instant captioning of the spoken word).

You can reach the Centre for Disability and Work at 400 University Avenue, 10th floor, Toronto M7A 1T7 (voice: 416-326-7810; TDD/TTY: 416-326-7821; fax: 416-326-6287).

Illustration courtesy of Ontario Training and Adjustment Board



Consultant Buddy Burge takes Windsor staff through a training workshop designed to help manage stress by developing "personal parachutes."

Learning and growing with MCSS

As every employee knows, the ministry has been undergoing a substantial amount of reorganization and change. To support the restructuring of MCSS and enhance the skills of employees in working effectively in this environment, the Ministry Management Committee approved a three-year Training and Development Plan.

The objective of the plan is to assist managers and staff in taking on new responsibilities and learning new ways of working.

This plan, which is entering its third year, has adopted a three-pronged approach.

First, the Staff and Organizational Development Unit provides open sessions in Toronto which include workshops such as Managing Personal Change, Facilitation Skills, Consultation Skills and Performance Management. Pilot sessions on Policy Skills were offered in 1994 and other policy training is being planned in conjunction with the Restructuring Framework Project Team.

Second, the Staff and Organizational Development Team offers consultation to specific client groups to develop High-Functioning Work Teams. Some of the groups who have taken advantage of this include the Research and Program Evaluation Unit and Adoption and Operational Services.

Also available is the use of outside consultants to design and deliver training to support the ministry restructuring. The Training and Development Plan provides funding for this.

Training is taking place throughout the ministry. For example, the Peterborough Area Office received

approval for four workshops they requested through the plan. In the coming months, all 178 staff in the area office will participate in Basic Team-Building and Managing Change workshops; the management team will participate in High-Functioning Work Teams development sessions; and "train the trainer" sessions will be held in conjunction with the Ottawa and Kingston area offices, Rideau Regional Centre and Prince Edward Heights in Performance Management.

"This is training we would not be able to offer if the fund was not there," says Melanie Sangster, Peterborough's manager of human resources.

In the Windsor Area Office, all staff are participating in Performance Management and in a combined Managing Change/High-Functioning Team workshops. A consultant was hired through the fund to offer four days of workshops over a six-month period (so employees could take turns attending sessions and keep the offices sufficiently staffed).

"Overall, the response to the training has been very positive," says Sairoz Virani, the area office's human resources representative and chair of the local staff training and development committee. The training in Windsor has involved a series of progressive workshops and attendance continues to be high — a good sign that there is enthusiasm and commitment for it, she says.

If you're interested in training, contact Nellie Avila in Staff and Organizational Development at 416-327-4766, or e-mail AVILA.N.

York art

A mural commissioned to recognize the International Year of the Family was unveiled recently at York Detention Centre in Toronto. The mural, which is meant to be a permanent reminder of the centre's work with youth and their families, is based on a native theme. The colours — white, yellow, red and black — represent the four colours of the human race; the bird represents the light that is in all people and hope that never fades. The artist, Simon Paul-Dene (left) attended the unveiling which included a native blessing and purification ceremony conducted by native elder Vern Harper; also present were Minister Tony Silipo; McCaul Street School principal Ross Caradonna (the school provides



Photo: Sandra Russell

educational services to York); OPSEU Local 529 president Michael Mayers; York superintendent Dr. Gail Gonda; and native singer Geraldine Harper.

...Realigning in the North

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will have a revised management staffing model for community programs and direct services. The six existing district offices — in Kenora, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Timmins and North Bay — will report to the new Sudbury Area Office and will continue to provide direct services such as Family Benefits, Vocational Rehabilitation and Probation. District offices will also continue to work with local community agencies which receive transfer payments from MCSS, and program supervisors will continue to work out of them. Satellite offices will continue to report to the district offices.

The new area office in Sudbury will coordinate ministry activity in the north, and will ensure that northern views will be taken into account when

ministry policies are developed and implemented.

An Implementation Team led by Peter Noble, the manager of the Northern Support Services Branch, will coordinate the realignment. From February to May, the Implementation Team will consult widely about the realignment of functions with MCSS northern staff, Program Management Division and other stakeholders, and will produce a report which will provide a more detailed description of the new area office's functions and responsibilities.

For more information on the restructuring and implementation plans, please contact Peter Noble at 705-949-8052, ext. 229, or e-mail the new DEC account NORTH_REORG with questions, suggestions and comments,

Directives goes electronic

The *Directives* section of the *Directives and Guidelines Manual* from Management Board of Cabinet is now available on your All-in-1 DEC account. You can view it in a new database called MBS. It's in the same area as EMMA and LEG; choose "Ministry Applications" from the Word Processing (WP) menu.

The paper version of *Directives* is now obsolete and may be destroyed. Please be sure to recycle the paper. But note that the

Guidelines part of the manual is available in its paper format only. When Management Board updates this manual and provides it to us in electronic form, it will also be entered into MBS, so keep your paper *Guidelines* for the time being.

If you need assistance, please contact Frank DeFusco at 416-326-8021 (on e-mail, DEFUSCO_F@A1.HPOL1A) or Linda Page at 416-326-8015 (PAGE_L@A1.HPOL1A).

A ceremony of commitment



A special ceremony took place recently in which local community churches made a commitment to work with each other to promote the development and well-being of residents and staff at Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls. A covenanting ceremony was held in the chapel at Rideau to mark this pledge. The newly formed Ministerial Association Pastoral Care Task Force is making Rideau its pilot project to address the spiritual, religious and cultural needs of the community. This event also marks the implementation of an agreement between the provincial government and the Ontario

Multifaith Council for Spiritual and Religious Care.

Used in the ceremony was a covenanting cloth woven by Raymond Lefebvre under the guidance of Janet Girdwood, of the Special Training and Education Program at Rideau.

In the photo are (from left) Fr. Brian Hart, one of Rideau's chaplains; Rev. Ted Siverns, chair of the Area Ministerial Association; Raymond Lefebvre; and Mivelle Fournier of the executive management team responsible for clinical services at RRC. The cloth is a permanent symbol of this event.

— Desmond Sequeira, Chaplain, RRC

PLAIN LANGUAGE PLEASE

One rule in plain language is to use "active" sentences and a positive tone.

The "active voice" is the way we usually construct sentences when we speak.

Active sentences are:

- simply constructed;
- limited to one idea;
- positive in tone.

Put the "action" at the beginning of the sentence.

Instead of:

In early April, all applications will be reviewed by the committee.

Use:

The committee will review all applications in early April.

By tightening your sentences and using a positive tone, your document will be easier to understand and more personal.

ESR: The consultation process

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considered in the drafting of the final report. The end product will be an ESR Report which is both reflective of staff experience, perceptions and feelings, and a "road map" to realize employment equity within MCSS.

Your questions, comments and

suggestions continue to be greatly appreciated, and may be sent to the project account on DEC at ESR Project, or by mail to ESR Project, 17th Floor, 56 Wellesley St. W. Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1E9; project co-ordinator is Hunter Sagar.

Statistics at your fingertips

by Julia Naczynski

Need to know how many single-parent families there are in the Windsor area? Or perhaps the number of beds available for young offenders in Ottawa-Carleton?

You can get this kind of information in minutes, without leaving your desk — if you have the Community Indicators System installed on your personal computer.

In essence, CIS is one-stop shopping for all kinds of statistics about Ontario, covering education, health, social assistance, employment, labour — you name it.

The database includes financial information about ministry-funded services. Information is organized so that you can compare communities on various indicators of need and social factors; you can also compare communities on the basis of ministry program services and resources.

CIS is your own personal statistics unit on a disk, available to anyone in the ministry, in an easy-to-use format. CIS is especially helpful to staff who do planning, such as program supervisors, policy analysts, planning staff and managers.

CIS is a joint project of our Research and Program Evaluation Unit and Information Systems Branch (ISB). Response to this project has been very favourable, says Tom Stuckey of Research and Program Evaluation. "People love it and think it's great,"

says Tom. "The best part is, you don't need to know a lot about computers or statistics — it's easy to use."

Donna Porto, a planning officer in the Northwest Area Office in Thunder Bay, used CIS to develop the area's young offender system workplan. The demographic statistics she brought to the YO team pointed to a drop in the birth rate. This drop suggests that, in the coming years, there may be fluctuations in the need for certain children's services.

"CIS provides a wealth of knowledge from one source, and provides a high rate of return on the investment for management decision-making," says Donna.

Frank Fecteau, a planning officer at Toronto Area Office, agrees. "The information is available from many different sources, but the CIS puts it all in one place," he says. He has used it to pull together a presentation and a major report. "It's a great time-saver."

David Earle in the Windsor Area Office says staff have used CIS for community planning. He says that as job-link plans are developed, he'll be using CIS to gather social assistance data. A full training session for all program supervisors is being planned, he says.

The CIS project team included Tom Stuckey and Joel Clodman from the research unit and Elaine Lum from ISB. Working with a computer



"Statistics at your fingertips" sums up the convenience of the Community Indicators System, available to anyone in the ministry. Tom Stuckey, Joel Clodman and Elaine Lum were part of the joint team that developed CIS.

consultant, the team developed CIS version 2.0. Users from each area office and policy branch have been given training and a CIS disk. An advisory group, co-chaired by the manager of Research and Program Evaluation, Bryce Harper, and ISB's manager of Ministry-Wide Systems, Tom Enright, provides on-going input to improve the system.

CIS was built for use on a stand-alone PC. However, the next version (to be made available this fall) will be a networked Windows version, and will include three years of data up to Mar. 31, 1995.

If you're interested in obtaining CIS, contact Tom Stuckey at 416-325-5387 or Joel Clodman at 416-325-5386.



TECHNOLOGY TIPS

FROM INFORMATION
SYSTEMS BRANCH

Reading mail and bulletin boards the electronic way

Some new features are being added to All-in-1 with the new version (V3.0) that is being introduced across the ministry now. Installation and training should be completed by Mar. 31. Training will cover all locations, but won't cover every user, so feel free to ask your systems officer for help with these new options after they are installed.

Group conferencing

Group Conferencing is a new feature which lets users share ideas and information across a network using a bulletin-board type of format. This feature will support "Workplace Greening" by reducing the use of paper, reduce network traffic, and reduce the need for disk storage.

For example, a conference called "JOB POSTINGS" could contain up-to-date jobs ads for available Ontario Public Service competitions; individuals searching for a job could then periodically check the listings.

Looking after someone else's e-mail

You can now look after another person's e-mail for them. This can be useful for dealing with people's e-mail

while they are away, such as staff looking after their manager's mail while the manager is on vacation.

Before you can work with other people's mail, they have to give you permission using the Grant Mail Access (GMA) option and then the Set Mail User (SMU) option. After this is done, their electronic messaging options are relayed to the user name they have chosen to accept the messages (you, for example). This would enable you to read and reply to messages on the absent person's behalf. When you have viewed the absent person's messages, use the SMU option and enter your own user name to get back to your own mail.

When granting others access to your e-mail, you can specify one of three levels of access: Process Mail, which gives permission to read mail but not to send it out under the original recipient's name; Send Mail, which gives permission to read and reply to the original recipient's mail (but shows the real sender's name); and Control, which gives complete access to the mail, including the ability to modify the list of people who can access it.

People and Places

Indira Singh began her new position as Manager of the Employment Equity Office on Jan. 23. She will be on a one-year secondment in this role, and brings unique experience to the position. Previously Indira was the Manager of Planning and Systems Unit at the Thunder Bay Area Office; she is also on the Employment Systems Review Task Force, which is now preparing its final report. Indira has also worked in the Alberta public service, for the Ministry of Social Services and Community Health, and the Alberta Treasury at progressive levels of responsibility.

Lisa Ker is now the Executive Assistant to the Director of Developmental Services Branch, Brian Low. Previously she was a French Language Services Officer in the corporate ELS Office. Lisa has also worked at the Mississauga Area Office, and she is a member of the Employment Systems Review Task Force.

The Child Care Branch has recently concluded a policy analyst competition and has three new staff. Nathalie Therivierge comes to us from the Ministry of Finance where she was most recently

working as a bilingual insurance adviser. Her telephone number is 416-327-2265. Lisa Levin joins us from the Ministry of Housing where she was working as a policy adviser in the areas of housing, urban and social planning and environmental policy. Lisa also has French language skills. Reach her at 416-327-4859. And Sylvia Habib comes to us from the Ministry of the Attorney General where she has worked as both a policy analyst and acting policy manager in the Victim/Witness program. Her number is 416-327-4857.

The Community Services Branch has two new staff in the Policy Support and Co-ordination Unit.

Roberta Marinich can be reached at 416-327-4949; Mohamad Haniff is available at 7-4985.

Judith Buxton has joined the ministry on a secondment from the Ontario

Insurance Commission. She is the Co-ordinator of Communications, Marketing and Issues Management for the Social Assistance Automation

Project. Her office is 880 Bay St., 4th floor, and she can be reached at 416-326-6118.

Janis Fraser is now the Manager, Planning and Development. Janis most recently has been the Human Resources Co-ordinator. Prior to this, Janis was our Redeployment Co-ordinator and was a Human Resources Manager within the field HR service delivery system.



Indira Singh



Judith Buxton



Janis Fraser



LIBRARY CORNER



by Dolly Lyn, Library and Career Resources manager

Reference and research services upon request

Maybe you're drafting a new policy, examining new ways for program delivery or just need information on a work-related issue. Whatever you need, you can turn to the MCSS library for research assistance.

The library's research capability is not restricted to its own in-house specialized resources. Library staff could decide that the best way to answer a question is an on-line search of resources stored in "cyberspace" — to more than 1,000 external on-line databases which range from full-text newspaper articles of local and international newspapers to specialized magazine indexes. The search results sent to the requester could be the actual articles, or an edited bibliography with abstracts.

The staff will go to great lengths through its inter-library loan service to get that crucial book or article

needed for your research. Our LCR is part of an extensive inter-library network which allows us to obtain materials not available in our specialized collection.

Needs assessment, program evaluation, conflict resolution, newspaper articles on systemic racism, the address of an obscure organization in Australia, a recent legal decision... this is a cross-section of the types of inquiries recently handled by the library staff.

How to access these services? It's very easy! MCSS staff can contact the library's reference desk by phone at 416-326-6448, by e-mail to the LIBRARY account or by visiting the library (4th Floor, 880 Bay Street, Toronto) and consulting the library's on-line database. (But please note: staff taking courses at university are required to do their own research.)

New SARB chair

Maureen Adams has been appointed Chair of the Social Assistance Review Board for a three-year term. She was first appointed a member of SARB in 1988, and became

the board's first Executive Chair in 1993. She replaces Laura Bradbury, who has taken a position in the Office of the Adjudicator in the Ministry of Labour.

dialogue

Ontario Community and Social Services

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